

## REMARKS

This application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action dated April 13, 2004. Claims 1 to 7 and 10 to 18 are in the application, with Claims 8 and 9 having been cancelled. Claims 1 to 7 and 10 to 18 have been amended. Claims 1 and 10 to 14 are in independent form. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, Claims 1 to 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,631,356 (Van Horn). Claims 8 and 9 have been cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter and without conceding the correctness of their rejection. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of the remaining claims are respectfully requested.

The present invention generally concerns the bulk purchase of a product by a group. According to the present invention, in a case when a request is received for a group bulk purchase indicating a product to be purchased, (i) a purchase state is stored corresponding to a unique ID, and (ii) a special favor is given to a purchaser (or purchasers) on the basis of the stored purchase state.

Referring specifically to the claims, independent Claim 1 as amended is directed to a bulk purchase group management server connectable with at least one terminal through a network. The server includes receiving means for receiving, from the terminal operated by a purchaser, a request for a group bulk purchase indicating a product to be purchased, and notifying means for notifying the terminal of an ID uniquely corresponding to the group bulk purchase. The server also includes storage means for storing a purchase state corresponding to the ID, and update means for updating the

purchase state stored in the storage means when a purchase of the product indicated in the group bulk purchase is performed using the ID by another purchaser. In addition, the server includes control means for giving a special favor to the purchasers on the basis of the purchase state stored in the storage means.

Independent Claim 10 as amended is directed to a terminal connected through a network with a bulk purchase group management server. The network with a bulk purchase group management server includes receiving means for receiving a request for a group bulk purchase from the terminal operated by a purchaser, and notifying means for notifying the terminal of an ID uniquely corresponding to the group bulk purchase. The network with a bulk purchase group management server also includes storage means for storing a purchase state corresponding to the ID, and update means for updating the purchase state stored in the storage means when a purchase of a product indicated in the group bulk purchase is performed using the given ID by another purchaser, and control means for giving a special favor to the purchaser on the basis of the purchase state stored in the storage means. The terminal is used for, in case a group bulk purchase is requested to the bulk purchase group management server, notifying the bulk purchase group management server of the request for the group bulk purchase including purchase conditions including at least the name and the number of products to be purchased.

Independent Claim 11 as amended is directed to a group bulk purchase method. The method includes the steps of receiving a request for the group bulk purchase from a terminal having an ID in case a request for the group bulk purchase indicating a product to be purchased is made, and notifying the terminal having the ID uniquely corresponding to the group bulk purchase in case the request for the group bulk purchase is

received. The method also includes the steps of storing a purchase state corresponding to the ID, and updating the purchase state stored in the step of storing a purchase state in case a purchase of the product indicated in the group bulk purchase is performed using the ID by a purchaser. In addition, the method includes the step of giving a special favor to the purchaser on the basis of the purchase state stored in the step of storing a purchase state.

In a similar manner independent Claims 12, 13 and 14 as amended are respectively directed to a program, a recording medium and a selling system.

The applied art is not seen to disclose or suggest the features of the invention of the present invention. In particular, the Van Horn patent is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the features of (i) storing a purchase state corresponding to a unique ID, and (ii) giving a special favor to a purchaser (or purchasers) on the basis of the stored purchase state.

As understood by Applicants, Van Horn discloses an online buying group ("co-op") that is formed for the specific purpose of purchasing a particular product by defining a start and end time, critical mass, minimum and maximum number of units offered, starting price and product cost curve. A co-op is defined by merchandising and yield management personnel. See Van Horn, column 9, lines 23 to 25. As data is gathered, the co-op is modified at using a pricing tool, so as to take into account for this market data in the definition of the price curve. A buyer chooses a product co-op of interest, and is presented with co-op information including current price, closing time, and next price level sufficient to entice the buyer to make an offer. A buyer can make an offer at the current price, or at a lower price range that can be accepted only if the co-op price drops to that level. See Van Horn, Abstract.

Although Van Horn teaches collective purchasing of a product, nothing in Van Horn is seen to disclose or suggest storing a purchase state corresponding to a unique ID, and giving a special favor to a purchaser (or purchasers) on the basis of the stored purchase state.

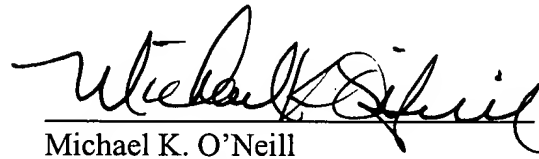
Accordingly, based on the foregoing amendments and remarks, independent Claims 1 and 10 to 14 as amended are believed to be allowable over the applied reference.

The other claims in the application are each dependent from the independent claims and are believed to be allowable over the applied reference for at least the same reasons. Because each dependent claim is deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

No other matters being raised, it is believed that the entire application is fully in condition for allowance, and such action is courteously solicited.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Costa Mesa,  
California office at (714) 540-8700. All correspondence should continue to be directed to  
our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael K. O'Neill", written over a horizontal line.

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